



Chief Editor: Elsie Davis

July - August 2014



RD's Corner

The 238th birthday of America on July 4th was a reminder of the power of big ideas. American

colonists, dissatisfied with the arbitrariness of their existence under the rule of a British monarch, crafted what we now enjoy as American democracy—a truly big idea that includes rights and freedoms that today are the envy of much of the world. Creating the big idea was step one; sustaining democracy is an ongoing process. It means we honor our past, but we also improve our democracy's ability to fulfill its promise rather than rest on our laurels.

In the world of fish and wildlife conservation, we see the same dynamic at play: Those who have been willing to take risks by thinking bigger have had a huge impact on the environment and on society. Paul Kroegel, Rachel Carson, and the Muries didn't shrink from challenges—they rose up to confront them with the power of new ways of doing things. All of us who have made sustainable fish and wildlife resources and healthy ecosystems our life's work face the same choice as our patriotic forebearers and our conservation heroes: Do we settle for what is, or do we dare to think bigger about what could be? Do we rest on our laurels or seek continuous improvements in our approaches, processes, and outcomes?

This topic is part of an ongoing dialogue between your Regional Directorate Team and project leaders which that

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John Robinette works on an artificial nesting platform in the background while biologists Billy Brooks and Willie Booker band a stork. photo, USFWS

John Robinette uses innovative artificial nesting "trees" to help recover the wood stork

By Katherine Taylor, External Affairs

What does it take to ensure the survival of a species? John Robinette, former Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex biologist at Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, knows that in the case of wood storks, it takes a bold vision, teamwork, wood, rebar, some fencing and a hefty workout.

In June, we celebrated the reclassification of the wood stork from endangered to threatened. Let's look back on one of the innovative projects that contributed to their population increase in Georgia.

As a biologist at Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge for 20 years, Robinette was instrumental in the ongoing recovery of wood storks. In 1987, the first wood stork nests were observed at the refuge's rookery, Woody Pond, with 18 nests producing 43 chicks to flight stage. The following year, raccoons raided the nests when water levels dropped in the nesting pond. To protect nesting storks from predators, the pond was expanded and the water level increased by six feet.

In order for wood storks to thrive they require deep water in their nesting pond throughout the nesting season. Herein lies the problem. Wood storks need trees

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RD's Corner continued...

took on new energy recently in a conference call in late June. Together, we looked at the outstanding work that is being carried out by Service employees in the Southeast and juxtaposed that against the realities of the 21st-century challenges we face—urbanization at unparalleled scales; and changes to habitats, water quality and quantity, driven or exacerbated by climate change. Then we talked about how, as Steve Jobs once put it, to “make a dent in the universe” from a conservation standpoint.

For example, we discussed the fact that 89 percent of the land in the Southeast Region is privately held, and that the Service owns and manages four million acres in 129 extraordinary national wildlife refuges. Graphically, that's about two percent of the Southeast's landscape. We are one of about 100 conservation organizations working on that landscape; but that still isn't enough to get the job done for fish, wildlife, and people in an area so vast as the Southeast Region. To fulfill the promise of our nation's fish and wildlife

legacy, we have to engage with those who own and influence the other 89 percent of the landscape. We are all in this together, whether we realize it or not; and collectively, we can do together what none of us can do alone.

As leaders, it is our job to make sure a couple of key things happen relative to the conservation challenges we face and the ways we are asking you to respond. One is to be sure that our communication is clear about the various pieces and parts of a landscape-scale approach to conservation, or Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC). For example, clarity about what the roles are of FWS programs; Landscape Conservation Cooperatives; Climate Science Centers; and Southeast Region initiatives, such as the Southeast Climate Adaptation Strategy (SECAS), the At-Risk Species initiative, the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP), and the Gulf Restoration, to name a few, is essential information every employee needs to understand where we are headed and how your work fits in. If you need additional information on these conservation efforts and other on-going

efforts, please contact your Regional Directorate Team member or your project leader.

And that leads to the second responsibility we have: to make sure we are engaging all employees in dialogue, where we get your ideas and recommendations, hear your concerns, and answer your questions. With this knowledge and this dialogue, the leader in you will be fully empowered; and this “big idea” of conserving resources at the landscape-scale working across program, state, and public/private boundaries will become the new reality.

We are ramping up that conversation with all employees in the days and weeks ahead. I encourage all of you to be bold in asking questions, making suggestions and looking for ways to make breakthroughs that will lead us to even better outcomes for the resources we all cherish. We can do this thing, of that I'm sure. We ARE doing this thing—let's focus on getting the momentum we need to make our dent in the universe and contribute to something bigger than all of us. ❖

- Cindy

John Robinette continued

for nesting, but raising water levels can mean losing trees because many types of trees cannot tolerate being flooded year-round and will die if the wetland is kept flooded year after year.

It was Robinette who in the early nineties proposed the idea of building artificial nesting structures as a solution to the loss of trees. Though the proposal was originally met with some skepticism from fellow biologists, the refuge adopted it. Under Robinette's leadership, Harris Neck staff built six artificial nesting structures from wood, rebar, and fencing. They also planted cypress trees.

What started as six artificial nests grew to 50 in a few years, with wood storks using the artificial nests until the planted cypress trees were large enough. By 2002, the per fledgling rate at Woody Pond was 20 percent above nests in other rookeries, and in 2012, biologists counted a record of 484 nests.

Ever humble, Robinette will be the first to tell you this success takes a village.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources was a key player, helping to build the nest platforms and lay them out in the pond, and both Ducks Unlimited and the Service's Southeast Regional Office provided funding. Harris Neck staff and countless volunteers dedicated their time to the effort, and Orangeburg National Fish Hatchery provided fish for the ponds.

“It was a huge cooperative effort that was very rewarding,” said Robinette.

For Robinette, recovering wood storks was more than just a job; it was a passion and a family affair. Keeping count of nests is extremely time consuming. Fortunately, Mrs. Robinette loves birds as much as her husband, so when the refuge needed to know how many birds fledged per nest on average, she would accompany him and help count.

“For me it was a great experience to share with my family,” he continued. “My youngest daughter spent hours watching wood storks snap their bills or come up with a fish to help to determine the success of our feeding ponds.”

Service biologist Billy Brooks had the opportunity to work closely with Robinette and perfectly describes him in one sentence:

“John was a can-do biologist.”

For more information on the wood stork, including additional conservation planning tools and the recovery plan, visit <http://www.fws.gov/northflorida/WoodStorks/wood-storks.htm>. ❖

Employee Spotlight

Aaron Valenta

*By Ellen Marcus,
External Affairs*

Aaron's earliest memories are of the outdoors in South Texas either planting something or exploring some interesting out-of-the-way place. As the son of an avid hunter and fisherman, he had opportunities to see many natural areas first hand. Aaron was always more comfortable with a camera instead of a gun but shared the same appreciation for the outdoors. His earliest passion was always plants. He had a rabid fascination with tropical epiphytes, particularly bromeliads. By the age of 15, he had his own USDA plant importation permit and was exploring the cloud forests of northern Mexico to add to his tropical collection. A secondary fascination was of wet ecosystems starting with intermittent stream systems, and ranging up to large swamp systems such as the Okefenokee and Everglades. Every, really every, family vacation had to have a stop in some wet place or other to be a success.

Building on a life's fascination with wet places, Aaron's career began with the Georgia Department of Transportation completing wetland delineations, permitting, and, developing wetland restoration and creation sites. Additional work with threatened and endangered species quickly followed, building on



Aaron's fascination with ecosystems as a whole; focusing on the whole while appreciating the many constituent elements.

When not at work, he's usually found in the yard planting, pruning, or harvesting something or other. If you can't reach him, no worries, he'll get back to you on the next trip in for an iced tea break. ❖

What's Trending

By Katherine Taylor, *External Affairs*



Apps: Do you enjoy interactive apps? Well, with this app when you “win” we all win! EcoChallenge is a free app that provides you with challenges to reduce your impact on the environment. It's incredibly simple. You choose a topic, select a challenge, and then swipe to accept the challenge.



#MostSharedStory: This is what the morning carpool looks like for a mama opossum! Bill Peterson, refuge manager at Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge, snapped this photo that blew up on the Southeast's Facebook page. We reached 7,731 people!

Social Media: This month Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced the reclassification of wood storks from endangered to threatened at Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge. Live tweets from @usfwseast went out during her announcement, and we highlighted the event on Facebook and our @usfws Instagram.

Culture: Did you know the 2014 FIFA World Cup was the biggest social event in web history? Kevin Lowry, Visitor Services manager at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, came up with an idea to capitalize on the World Cup's social media momentum. He wrote a Facebook post tying Paul Kroege's German heritage to Germany winning the World Cup. The result? Pelican Island's page has reached 678,144 Facebook users and the Southeast page, which shared the post, reached 597,760 users. That's roughly 1.3 million people. ♦

What Do You Think?

Do you think soccer has become a major U.S. sport? Did you watch the World Cup? Do your kids play soccer? Go to https://docs.google.com/a/fws.gov/forms/d/1vgjlp7z8QNF-1TB8Mp1ptFmnNfn_k5Cdyp98Lhm0MU/edit ♦

Bragging Rights



Kirtland's Warbler, photo, Thomas Dunkerton

Kirtland's warbler touches down at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

By Nancy Corona, *Merritt Island*

Finding a Kirtland's warbler within a 140,000-acre refuge is like the old adage states, “It's like finding a needle in a haystack.” Yet, in April, my husband Tom Dunkerton and nine year old son Jack, bird watchers and photographers, discovered the rare Kirtland's warbler feeding in a grove of trees by the Merritt Island Manatee Observation Deck. While waiting for a drawbridge to close so they could proceed, my husband and son decided to pass the time checking for migrant songbirds. Birding knowledge plus a pinch of luck provided Tom and Jack with a wonderful surprise, finding one of the rarest birds in North America.

Kirtland's warblers winter in the Bahamas and migrate north to their breeding grounds in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Canada. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2,090 singing males

were observed in 2012, while back in 1987, an all-time low count of 167 singing males was documented. Population growth indicates that management efforts are helping this species recover. It is wonderful to know that Merritt Island provides habitat for this endangered songbird to rest and feed during its long and arduous migration. For more information the Kirtland's Warbler visit: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/birds/Kirtland> ♦

Loxahatchee helps conduct annual butterfly count

By Marcie Kapsch, Arthur R. Marshall
Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge



Dainty sulphur's mating, photo, Alana Edwards, Atala Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association

Every year since 1996, the Atala Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association has conducted butterfly counts at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. This year marked the 18th year of consecutive surveys at the refuge. These counts are held around the Fourth of July, typically the last weekend in June and/or the first weekend in July. A total of six volunteers and one refuge wildlife biologist participated in the annual count, and a total of 33 species were recorded on June 28. This year's species count is slightly higher from the last few years with 32 and 24 butterfly species recorded in 2012 and 2013, respectively

Pollinators play a crucial role in flowering plant reproduction and in the production of most fruits and vegetables. Over the last several years, there is increasing evidence that many pollinators are in decline due to habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, and invasive species threats. Many species of butterflies can be



seen around the Visitor Center, or by walking the Cypress Swamp Boardwalk, the Marsh Trail, or around the refuge ❖

Aaron's skipper, photo, Alana Edwards, Atala Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association

Bulls Bay Nature Festival – A celebration of nature and community

By Patricia Midgett, Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge



Kayaking Cape Romain wilderness, photo, Pat McCormack

Bulls Bay Nature Festival – From the Forest to the Sea, brought people together from the Sewee to Santee for an outdoor celebration of nature and community in South Carolina. Federal, state and local agencies and organizations, town municipalities, schools, businesses, and local musicians and artists joined forces for a second year to encourage people of all ages to get outside and enjoy nature-based activities in this festive one-day event. A diverse array of activities took



Archery is cool. Archery lesson, photo, Olga Caballero

place at Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, Francis Marion National Forest, Camp Sewee Marine Science Center, Hampton Plantation State Park, Bishop Jerdan Conference Center, and at the Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center, the hub for the festival.

The festival offered something for everyone. There were kayak trips into the estuary and black water creeks of Cape Romain and Francis Marion wilderness areas, and people tested their skills on the paddleboards in the Bishop Jerdan pond. With binoculars and field guides in hand, people accompanied their guides into the forest to spot songbirds, butterflies and wildflowers in the Carolina bays. You could hear the zing of fishing lines as kids and their families dropped their bait into the Sewee Pond to catch catfish, and there was even a virtual casting for marlin in a simulator van! Live raptor, reptile, and red wolf presentations captivated the festival goers throughout the day at the Sewee Center. Other activities highlighting the cultural heritage of the community included a sweet grass basketry workshop, and tours to the ancient Sewee Native American shell ring and the antebellum Hampton Plantation

mansion. Kids enjoyed fishing workshops, archery, salt marsh and pond explorations and nature art. Toddlers with parents sported brightly painted faces and paper turtle hats and red wolf masks.

Rudy Mancke, South Carolina's celebrated naturalist, closed the festival with his keynote presentation *It's All About Connections*, a program which underlies the mission of the Bulls Bay Nature Festival. More than 400 people came out to enjoy the abundant natural resources of the Bulls Bay area and, 65 volunteers freely gave their time, making significant contributions to the success of the festival. ❖

Spring-breakers connect with nature

By Melody Ray-Culp, Ecological Services, Panama City Field Office



Metanoians greet the new day as the sun rises over St. Joseph Bay, photo, Melody Ray-Culp, USFWS

Its connective elbow to the mainland is heavily armored, and the beach is for sale along much of the St. Joseph Peninsula (SJP). Not so at the SJP State Park, which occupies the northern portion of this 15-mile-long, arcing spit. An international group of about 30 Principia College students sought out this piece of Florida Panhandle paradise for a week of quiet contemplation. As members of the Metanoia Expedition, they exchanged hectic academic and social schedules for the joys of solitude during a mid-March spring break this year.

Leadership Quote

*“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”
— Theodore Roosevelt*



Melody Ray-Culp Outreach: Spring-breakers from Principia College make a sea turtle connection before nesting season gets underway along St. Joseph Peninsula – note diorama showing hatchling emergence, Pphoto, Larry Clough

“A direct knowing of God” is one of the many definitions of the term “metanoia.” The trip was offered as a way to restore the lost art of solitude, stillness, and profound spiritual listening in a tech-based, often stressful world. Principia College, in Elsah, Illinois, seeks to educate the “whole man” – the academic, athletic, social, moral, and spiritual. The focus was on that spiritual component, providing a golden opportunity for Metanoians from several countries (including Kenya, England, and the Philippines) to unplug, and connect with their spiritual nature through immersion in Florida’s great outdoors.

This was not your typical alcohol-fueled spring break happening at the same time on Panama City Beach, 50 miles west. After cooking breakfast over several backpacking stoves and making a lunch, the task each day was to go “solo,” perhaps with a book selected from the Metanoia Library bin. Students could head north into the SJP State Park’s Wilderness Preserve, west to the sugar sand beach of the Gulf of Mexico, or east to the still salt marsh along St. Joseph Bay. They came back before dusk to cook

dinner, then went off to play Frisbee on the beach or enjoy a polar bear swim while the sun set. Later, they enjoyed a social gathering to reflect on the day and share insights around the campfire while feasting on toasted marshmallows and strawberries dipped in melted chocolate.

Generous donors ensure that every student who wants to participate has use of a tent, backpack, headlamp (batteries included), and Crazy Creek chair – all for the bargain tuition of \$170.

On the second evening, I had the pleasure of giving an outreach talk to this unique group of young people, making a sea turtle connection by asking them to close their eyes and imagine themselves as female loggerheads waiting patiently offshore for the night sky to darken before hauling their heavy bodies up the beach to dig a nest. They contemplated the frenzied emergence of hatchlings, whose sex was determined by sand temperature (hot chicks and cool dudes!), the many threats that have endangered sea turtles, and what they as individuals could do to protect sea turtles and contribute to peaceful co-existence.

Immersed in a culture continuously tethered to electronic devices, how refreshing it is to know that the gentle art of solitude and quiet contemplation in nature is still being encouraged and practiced. ❖

The long way home

By Marshall Sasser, Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge



Swallowtail Kite Release Waccamaw: Derek Stoner releases the swallowtail kite at Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge, photo, John Henry Sasser

On March 11, 2014, Vulcan, a winter storm, dumped snow, followed by high winds, throughout the West. Vulcan skipped over the Central Plains leaving little snow or moisture behind. The next day, Vulcan wreaked havoc east of the Mississippi. Strong winds, freezing rain, and snow all culminated to create a winter storm that impacted wildlife, as well as people, for several days.

Neotropical migratory birds, including swallow-tailed kites, had already started their spring migration northward to places like Brazil, where the kites spend their winters. This mega storm created unanticipated challenges for migrating birds, many of which may have perished without a trace.

Early in the morning of March 13, Beth Whitmore of Whitehall Township, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, heard a large group of crows cawing from a tree in her backyard. Investigating the source of their distress, Beth noticed a beautiful black and white raptor on the ground near the tree. This raptor was like none she had ever seen before, and it was too weak to move. Beth called Pocono Wildlife Rehabilitation Center

(PWRC) in Stroudsburg, to report the bird. Within minutes PWRC capture/transport volunteer Barbara Miller arrived to transport the dying bird to the rehab facility. When the kite was assessed for injuries by PWRC Director Katherine Uhler it weighed 378 grams and could not stand. Over the next two weeks the kite regained weight reaching 426 grams and was eventually transported to the Tri-State Bird Rescue, in Newark, Delaware. Ironically this facility had received another kite that had been blown into Bucks County, Pennsylvania, by the same March storm.

Arrivals of swallow-tailed kites arriving in the mid-Atlantic region of Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, are becoming more common annually. A few kites show up in the spring, usually between the beginning of April and the middle of May. Kites observed in the spring in the mid-Atlantic are thought to be overshoots, meaning their migration back to their breeding locations went a bit too far north and they sailed into territories where they aren't likely to stay long. Overshoots are usually associated with a strong southerly wind that helps push the birds further and faster than they'd normally fly. It is nothing for a kite to travel a few hundred miles in a day in the right conditions. On occasion, in Cape May, at the tip of the New Jersey peninsula, the kites collect as they head south and try to make it across the Delaware Bay on their way to the Carolinas, which is the northernmost known nesting area for these spectacular birds.

After both kites were reunited at the Tri-State Bird Rescue Center, plans were made to get necessary permits for transporting these birds to warmer climates in South Carolina. The most important factor for their release is that they are released in suitable habitat where there are abundant food resources that will significantly improve the speed and extent of their recovery.

One of the volunteers at the Tri-State Rescue Center mentioned to Derek Stoner, manager of Middle Run Natural Area in Delaware and a volunteer for the Center, that there was an abundance of kites at Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge. Derek contacted Refuge Manager Craig Sasser and asked if one of the rehabilitated birds could be released at the refuge. On April 5, Derek and

his girlfriend Hilary Sullivan made an overnight trek from Delaware to South Carolina to release the kite. The other kite had been released with great success just days before at Francis Marion National Forest, just a short distance south of the refuge as a kite flies.

Derek, Hilary and a newly-banded kite arrived at the refuge headquarters around eight o'clock in the morning. Protective covers were removed from the kite's tail before the bird's release from the Yauhannah Bluff overlooking the Great Pee Dee River. As pictures were being taken, it became obvious to an audience of staff members and volunteers that this bird had finally made its way home. The kite soared, swooped, preened and put on an incredible aerial display before following the river upstream as if it had been there before. ❖



The snail kite while it was recovering at the Tri-State Rehabilitation Center. Photos, Barbara Miller; Tri-State Rehabilitation Center.



Double dipping in Gills Creek

By Greg Summers, The Lancaster News, Lancaster, South Carolina



Downstream view of the new crossing of Gills Creek at Happy Trail in Lancaster County, SC, photo, Morgan Wolf, USFWS

Since 2006, the Carolina heelsplitter has made many Panhandle residents shake their heads, due to the federally-protected species being found in a high-growth area along Six Mile Creek in Indian Land.

A critical habitat of the endangered mussel has also been identified in the stretch of Gills Creek between Cimmeron Road and Pageland Highway in Lancaster County, South Carolina.

In May, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made improvements to the section of the creek that flows beneath Happy Trail in an effort to improve the mussel habitat.

"We're really hoping it's going to normalize the creek flow to improve fish passage, which in turn, aids in mussel production," said Morgan Wolf, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist, who was onsite in Lancaster to help with the improvements. A crew of federal refuge and fish hatchery from four states were in Lancaster County to make the upgrades.

Wolf said that stretch of Gills Creek is one of five heelsplitter habitat areas that have been earmarked for improvements in 2014.



Restored segment of Gills Creek, photo, Morgan Wolf, USFWS.

“We became aware of these issues in 2012,” she said. “There is a critical heelsplitter area downstream and hopefully this will improve the quality.”

Upgrades include the reshaping, widening and rounding of the creek banks along a 300-foot section of Gills Creek. Multiple round culverts were torn out and replaced with a 26-foot-wide, five-and-a-half foot deep box culvert to hopefully eliminate an area where flood debris would accumulate. Gravel from road washouts that collects near Happy Trail was also removed.

The creek was temporarily dammed up pasture fences were moved, along with water and natural gas lines while the upgrades were made. Once the work was completed, the fences and lines were put back in place. Wolf lauded the patience of Happy Trail residents and landowners who worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service so the repairs could be made.

“This should make a more natural channel and then aid willows and live stakes to stabilize the banks and help control erosion,” Wolf said.

The Gills Creek upgrades won’t just improve the heelsplitter habitat.

It should also help downstream homeowners along Gills Creek Drive who have dealt with chronic flooding for almost 25 years.

The cost of the project is a little more than \$100,000 with the county paying for about \$55,000 worth of construction materials.

In looking at how much road improvements along Gills Creek Drive have cost in the past, Lancaster County Administrator Steve Willis said providing materials was money well spent.

Maintained by the county, Gills Creek Drive is a dead-end road off Pageland Highway, just east of Lingles Crossroads that is prone to flood in torrential storms.

In 2010, county public works crews dug up a section of the road and replaced the aging drainage pipes underneath to help curb flooding, but that didn’t last long at all.

During a September 2012 storm when 9 inches of rain fell, swift-moving water that washed over the Gills Creek Drive pavement cut a groove beneath the road surface on the downstream (western) side. That, in turn, exposed a water line, which ruptured from the force of the water rushing against it.

Residents had to use a emergency access road that cuts through a field and woods just to get to, and from their homes.

“My take on this is it’s a win-win for the residents with an improved creek crossing that was routinely flooding the environment with an improved creek crossing, and county taxpayers since the only out-of-pocket cost was materials,” Willis said.

“Since the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is another government entity, I won’t say the labor was free, as it ultimately was all taxpayer funded. We just had some help from the other 49 states on the labor part.” ♦

Note: This article appeared in The Lancaster News in Lancaster, South Carolina, on June 8, 2014. It is reprinted in E-Grits with permission from The Lancaster News.

Merritt Island and Lake Woodruff encourage Firewise communities

By Candice Stevenson, Merritt Island



Titusville, Florida residents talk to the fire staff on National Wildfire Preparedness Day, May 3, photo, Jay Mickey, USFWS.

To encourage local residents to create a defensible space around their homes, the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge’s fire staff partnered with Brevard County Fire Rescue to educate and inform homeowners about wildfire prevention in the Windover Farms neighborhood in Titusville, Florida. The neighborhood is surrounded by marsh and is considered a high risk for wildfire. In May, refuge staff and volunteers distributed educational materials to 200 residents and set up an information booth within the subdivision. The homeowners association was very receptive and invited the fire staff to return in the fall to give a presentation.

Residents near Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge and Lake George State Forest also received information packets from the refuge’s fire staff, Volusia County Fire Services, and Florida Forest Service on May 9. Materials distributed during both outreach events included Firewise pamphlets with tips on home maintenance and fire safe landscaping. Residents also were informed about the benefits of prescribed burning and the reduction of wildfire risk. These outreach efforts were part of the first annual National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day launched by the National Fire Protection Association (www.nfpa.org) to spark community action in reducing wildfire risk around homes. ♦

Mississippi partners celebrate Endangered Species Day

By Matthew Hinderliter, Mississippi Field Office, Jackson

On May 16, the Mississippi Field Office and the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science partnered together for the seventh year in a row to celebrate Endangered Species Day with hundreds of students from various parts of the state. The pupils ranged from third graders through seventh graders, each having an opportunity to experience live-animal presentations, arts and crafts, interactive exhibits, and special displays – all highlighting endangered species.

The students were given fun questionnaires asking them to fill in names of rare species beginning with each letter of the alphabet, as well as Mississippi trivia and endangered species word puzzles. One exhibit was a game challenging players to match unusually named endangered species, such as the orangefoot pimpleback mussel, with an artist's literal rendering of what such a strangely named species would look like. Another exhibit showed students confiscated items that were once living endangered species, such as sea turtles and crocodiles, to teach them about how poaching and overutilization of our resources can sometimes lead to a species needing protection.

Endangered Species Day at the museum was another fun learning experience for everyone involved. Field Office participants included: Amy Carson, fish and wildlife biologist; James Austin, private lands biologist; and me, Matt Hinderliter, wildlife biologist. The many museum participants included staff members and volunteers – they all assisted in this special outreach effort, as well as hosted the event at their state-of-the-art facility. ❖



Private Lands Biologist James Austin teaches students about some of the threats to endangered species by showing them illegal endangered species products confiscated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, photo, USFWS.



Fish and Wildlife Biologist Amy Carson and Wildlife Biologist Matt Hinderliter at Endangered Species Day at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, photo, USFWS.

Wild about summer camps at Red River Refuge

By Terri Jacobson, Red River National Wildlife Refuge



Start of canoe race, photo, Tim Fotinos

For the second year, children ages 4 to 14 years old attended summer day camps at Red River National Wildlife Refuge in Bossier City, Louisiana. Bird Camp for Kids, held the first week in June, is for beginning birders, bird lovers, and serious birders. All things avian happen at this camp: bird walks, bird banding, Simon Says bird topography, bird song match, bird bingo, bird feather masks, bird seed art, owl pellets and even bird exercises. Each day, we quiz campers with bird sounds and bird photographs. Campers earn stickers and other prizes by finding the correct bird in their bird identification guide

Our Outdoor Recreation Skills Camp filled up fast with excited campers. Who wouldn't want to try skeet shooting, archery, fishing and canoeing? These kids had so much fun being active outside. Inside they tied fly fishing lures, identified snakes, learned about fish seeing ultraviolet colors and played fishing bingo. We ended camp with a team competition organized similar to the popular TV show "Survivor." We had canoe races, an archery shoot for points, a fish identification quiz, and a rod and reel casting competition for points. The winning team of campers won bandannas!

Our Youngest Naturalist and Young Naturalist were half day camps, where the children learned about birds, insects, baby animals and beavers. The younger children made toilet paper roll bees, rainbow feathered birds, mom and baby paper plate turtles, and the older children made beaver dams in aluminum loaf pans.

Learning about bird beak adaptations, the older children used household tools as bird beaks to try catching food. A strainer and a small aquarium mesh net both work well for catching flying marshmallows; the pliers are good for cracking nuts, while the tweezers can pick up tiny grains of rice but couldn't crack pecans. ♦

Pines to the Gulf, a five-day camp sponsored by the Girl Scouts of Louisiana, took place in July at the refuge. Check out Facebook to see our camp photos at <https://www.facebook.com/RedRiverNWR>.

Educating teachers about the Everglades

By Serena Rinker, Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge



Bird campers dressed as whooping cranes, photo, Terri Jacobson

In June, the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge education staff hosted a total of 45 teachers during three different teacher in-service workshops.

Indoors and Out: Connecting Classrooms to Nature was held at four different locations, including the refuge, within Palm Beach County, Florida. This workshop demonstrates how to connect your students with nature whether teaching science lessons in the classroom, schoolyard or natural areas. It is a "get your feet wet" event designed to assist teachers in the delivery of real-world science connections by immersing students in fun, hands-on, nature investigations. The refuge has been a teaching partner



Teachers learn about fish adaptations, photo, Wendy Casperson, Loxahatchee NWR Summer Teacher Assisting Refuges (STAR) Teacher

in this workshop for approximately six years. The other partners include Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach (Pan's Garden), Palm Beach Maritime

Museum, University of Florida – Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (Mounts Potential Garden), and the Arthur R. Marshall Foundation.

Eight teachers from Conniston Community Middle School in West Palm Beach attended a workshop facilitated by professors from Palm Beach Atlantic University. Teachers explored and learned about the Everglades and the different ecosystems that are contained within it.

Teachers were given information about experiments and projects that they can do in the classroom when school resumes.

In mid-June, Florida Atlantic University's Pine Jog Environmental Education Center brought their Summer Institute Teacher Workshop to the refuge. Twenty-two elementary-school teachers were specifically learning the Everglades Foundation's Fifth Grade Field Experience lesson. Teachers participated in dip netting, minnow trap fish identification, water quality demonstrations and phosphorus water testing, and a cypress swamp boardwalk tour. They enjoyed spotting a sphinx moth caterpillar and a multitude of butterflies. ♦

Wildlife Habitat on Private Lands conference

By Dr. Ronnie Haynes, Regional Coordinator; Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program

I participated in the Arkansas Private Lands Partnerships' third biennial Wildlife Habitat on Private Lands Conference held on May 6-7, 2014 in Searcy, Arkansas. The theme of this year's conference was Applying Science to Restoring Habitat in a Changing Landscape. I talked about the importance of monitoring for carrying out a strategic approach to conservation delivery. Joe Krystofik, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program state coordinator, Arkansas, helped conduct the conference which attracted about 60 professionals from across a range of federal and state agencies, academia, private consultants, and select landowners.

Featured speakers during the conference included Dr. Fidel Hernandez, associate professor of Quail Research at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Dr. Keith McKnight, coordinator of Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture, and myself, Dr. Haynes. Topics included issues related to fragmentation effects on northern bobwhite observed at a landscape scale; applying landscape conservation planning to on-the-ground habitat conservation, and the importance of biological monitoring for measuring success of habitat restoration efforts and adapting future actions as dictated by the results. Other topics of interest included integrating wildlife management and production agriculture, managing flooded forests, promoting oaks in natural hardwood stands, bioenergy, an invasive plants website, and an update on the 2014 Farm Bill. The conference concluded with a field trip to view habitat restoration and management actions implemented through various USDA and other programs on private lands.

Several private landowners received Wildlife Stewardship Awards. Michael Budd, a Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program biologist, received the Outstanding Professional Award for his achievements in restoring and enhancing habitat on private lands in Arkansas. David Long, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Private Lands supervisor, received the Private Lands Partnership's Lifetime Achievement Award for

his contributions toward restoring, enhancing, and creating wildlife habitat on private lands. ❖

Follow the Leader Durwin Carter, Deputy Area Supervisor

By Jennifer Strickland, External Affairs



photo, USFWS

You've been a Deputy Area Supervisor in the Regional Office for just over two years now. What were some of the reasons you decided to make the transition from Refuge Manager?

I wanted the challenge. I wanted to see if I could contribute more to the Service. I really enjoyed what I was doing at field stations, but I wanted to see if I could do a little bit more.

What's one of your favorite projects you've worked on that gave you a sense of accomplishment?

Getting the Friends Group up and running at Holla Bend in Dardanelle, Arkansas, is one of the most satisfying things I've ever done. Your Friends are your advocates in the community. If you're going to continue to do your work, you need their help. We work for people.

Holla Bend is a neat place and it's valued by so many. I would go there on the weekends and see people out doing various things, but it'd always be the same people. Professors giving tours to students or master naturalists, hunters, fishermen, and photographers... and after seeing all these same people over and over, you realize, why don't we have a Friends Group?

To kick things off I sat at the head of the table, but then over time I started to slide into the corner and watch members go with it. It was so exciting to watch that happen. Garry Tucker told me it would take six months to a year to build the group and I said, "Oh nah, we can do it faster." But turns out... it does take six months to a year. That guy knows what he's talking about.

When I left the refuge I said to Carla Mitchell, "Please don't let this thing die." She promised she wouldn't. I'm thrilled to say that the Holla Bend Friends Group is still going strong.

What's something memorable a mentor told you that you reflect on now?

I remember when I was doing my Master's project, Lindsay Boring was the Director at the Jones Center and he said to me, "Durwin, I really want you to enjoy this time because it's going to be the one time in your life you're ever working on just one thing." I totally understand what he meant now!

You're known for being an outgoing guy who makes friends easily. How does that trait help you in your career, and are there times that it becomes a challenge?

I don't really think my outgoing personality limits me, it enhances. I try and listen to people. It's nice to be able to talk, but I think it's more important to be able to listen, and that's how you make connections.

When I was a Refuge Manager and dealing with a challenging situation or person in the community, I would try to separate the person from the job, recognize that there's another person there behind this issue, and consider what their motivation was in the conflict. It was easier to make connections with that perspective, and connections can make your job easier.

I know from working with you that you're also an advocate for digital communications, particularly social media. Can you tell us why you think using social media is important for our agency, and share any advice for those who might be on the fence?

Do it, do it, do it, do it. That's my advice to people on the fence. We have a job of taking care of habitat, animals, the water, the lands, and we're dependent upon federal dollars to do so. There's a whole generation of people who are connected to social media, and if we're not there, then they can't connect to us. If they don't connect to us, they're going to recommend that their tax dollars go elsewhere.

If you really care about what we do, being in the business of making decisions on the landscape for future generations of Americans, then you can't ignore the fact that we need to make a connection with our youth. Every time you walk around you see people staring at their palms -- even while driving!

Who's someone you look up to and why?

A lot of different people! Lincoln, Mandela....

In terms of people at work, I've been inspired by a lot of my supervisors, as well as people I've supervised because I'm impressed by individuals who are good at

what they do. For example, when I see a wage grade professional that really knows how to run their equipment, I will watch in awe. It's like their equipment is a third hand! Then when I get on it, I'm clunky.

Can you recommend any good books, movies, or training courses for aspiring leaders?

We have several books we're supposed to read on the Leadership Team in the RO, and there's was one I really liked, *Lincoln on Leadership* by Donald T. Phillips. What made it cool is that it revealed Lincoln's leadership style by giving historical background on what was happening in the country at the time and the challenges he faced, and then how he addressed them. We can do that same sort of thing now.

The beauty was, it was really short, but also enjoyable. It left me motivated. ♦

Get to Know an Office

Fairhope, Alabama, NRDAR Staff

By Nanciann Regalado, NRDAR

Jon Hemming: Having grown up on the northern Gulf coast and having worked here most of my career, I'm excited to continue to contribute to restoring the unsurpassed natural resources that we are so fortunate to have. Following a wonderful childhood enjoying fishing, diving, swimming, and surfing, I received my Marine Biology degree from the University of West Florida in Pensacola, and began working in the estuarine ecotoxicology arena at the EPA Gulf Ecology Division. My graduate education flowed from this experience and was received from the University of North Texas where I was formally trained in the fields of Aquatic Toxicology and Ecotoxicology. Following graduation, I worked with the Life Sciences Department at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama, as their Assistant Professor of Ecotoxicology. I first joined the Service in 2001, at the Panama City Ecological Services Field Office as their Contaminant Specialist and later went on to become their Deputy Field Office Supervisor in 2011. As a

long-time resident on the shores of the northern Gulf of Mexico, I was thrilled to move to Fairhope as the Field Supervisor as we rolled into 2013. I am excited about what we continue to accomplish here in Fairhope.

Erin Chandler: I joined the Service in 2008, and since then, I've been employed as a biologist in Regions 2, 8, and 4. Through my six years with the Service, I worked under several programs including the Coastal Program, Ecological Services, and Migratory Birds. I'm currently working as an assessment biologist in the Fairhope NRDAR office. I like the fast pace of the NRDA world, and the new challenges that arise quite often. My daily office activities revolve around project management, coordination with federal and state trustees, and COR responsibilities; each day seems to hold an opportunity to learn something new.

Prior to my federal career, I worked as a coastal ecologist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. My husband, Rob, and I reside in Pensacola, Florida, where Rob is a Naval Aviator and Flight Instructor for flight students. We enjoy spending time on the beach with our two dogs. I'm an avid scuba diver, underwater photographer, and novice spearfisher.

Ben Frater: As a child, I spent a good deal of my time riding my bike to the fishing holes that were scattered about the landscape of my southern Wisconsin home. But truth be told, I was a lousy angler. So it wasn't long before I'd be sitting on the bank, rummaging through my backpack for the tattered field guides that could help me identify the birds, trees, and flowers that stood witness to my fishing follies. As soon as age and education allowed, I began roaming further in search of new critters—and jobs, of course. My professional adventures have unfolded quite a bit like those of my childhood, starting out with fisheries, then adding birds, plants, butterflies, forests, etc. until I had explored the four corners of our country. I've spent about eight years with the Service now, and consider it my home.

When "The Spill" happened, I was working as the beach mouse lead for our Panama City, Florida field office. It was my obligation to beach mice that led me to get involved immediately with the response effort and NRDA. So, when it looked like a permanent Deepwater Horizon NRDA office would

be established to deal with the long term restoration, I knew it was an opportunity of a lifetime. As a restoration biologist, I'm currently planning and implementing projects that compensate for injury to resources such as beach mice, sea turtles, birds, and our refuges. The lagniappe is an opportunity to live in Fairhope, which is a special town; my wife and I consider it the perfect place to be raising our three young daughters.

Helen Hammergren: I'm so happy to be the Administrative Officer for the Deepwater Horizon NRDAR Field Office in Fairhope Alabama. My career began with NOAA's National Weather Service in Key West, Florida, as an Administrative Officer and Hydrometeorological Technician. After 27 years in paradise, I transferred to Weather Service headquarters near Washington DC and became a management analyst. Working and living in the DC area was one of the highlights of my career, but after a year and a half I decided it was important to be closer to home. I was hired as the Administrative Officer for the FWS Gulf Coast Refuge Complex, and stationed at the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge in Gautier, Mississippi. I was there for a few years before the oil spill occurred and changed my life. Three months after getting married, my new husband and I packed up and moved to Fairhope where I have assumed my current duties. I'm very grateful for this opportunity to work on such an important project and to see restoration in an area I call home. In my spare time I enjoy trying to make things grow in my garden, exploring the Gulf Coast area, and cheering on my Florida State University Seminoles.

Kate Healy: I began my 15-year career with the Service as a Prescribed Fire Specialist on the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. I then worked for the Upper Columbia River Ecological Services Field Office as an Environmental Contaminants Field Biologist evaluating remedial success through biological resource monitoring on the Bunker Hill Superfund Site, Idaho (Coeur d'Alene Basin NRDAR). In due course, I eventually helped implement Agricultural to Wetland restoration projects, creating safe waterfowl feeding habitat in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. I'm currently working as an Assessment Biologist on the Deepwater Horizon NRDAR.

My career as a biologist began at Archbold Biological Station in Lake Placid, Florida, where numerous mentors guided me

in becoming a natural historian and conservation biologist. While my primary focus was working on the gopher tortoises, lizards, snakes, and frogs of south-central Florida, I was also engaged in peripheral projects which allowed me to develop expertise on birds, small mammals, plants, and insects.

On a busman's holiday to study elephant seals for Point Reyes Bird Observatory (now Point Blue) at the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge, I extended my stint to include the spring seabird season and began my career change from herpetologist to seabird biologist. A trip to Antarctica studying South Polar Skuas and another stint on the Farallones led to a federal position monitoring seabirds at Channel Islands National Park, the flagship Inventory and Monitoring Park for the National Park Service.

I began working for the Service in 2010 at the Bay-Delta Fish and Wildlife Office. My expertise in seabirds and monitoring brought me to the Deepwater Horizon Field Office where I am a Contracting Officer's Representative managing assessment contracts.

My work in south central Florida has become a life-long interest. I've been doing the Lake Placid, Florida, Christmas Bird Count since it was initiated by Archbold and Highlands County Audubon in 1987. Each year I begin my survey before dawn by hooting for Barred Owls at the sprawling XL Ranch marsh, and end the day at Driggers Ranch counting Sandhill Cranes flying to roost.

Vanessa Scott: I am the Program Assistant for the NRDAR Field Office in Fairhope, Alabama. I've been with the Service for two years and nine months. Prior to working with the Service, I worked for two years in Human Resources with the Department of Veterans Affairs in Tennessee. I'm a retired Army Veteran, and I'm really enjoying my time here with the NRDAR staff. I'm also glad to be back at home in beautiful Alabama.

Brian Spears: I currently serve as the Restoration Manager in the Fairhope NRDAR Field Office. My duties include developing alternatives to restore bird resources injured by the oil spill, or, in other words, recommending the best way to get our birds back. Which, given the extent of the impacts from the spill, the dynamic nature of the Gulf, and the challenges our Gulf birds face, I've learned is not an easy

task. As we progress, this will transition into increased collaboration with partners to implement those projects.

I'm honored to serve in this position for the Service, however, and devote my time toward serving our birds well. The greatest joy of my job stems from being able to call upon and incorporate the vast knowledge of a cadre of experienced Service veterans, as well as collaborate with talented employees from many other state and federal agencies and organizations.

Prior to my current position I served as a Service Resource Contaminants Specialist for eight years at the Coeur d'Alene, Idaho CERCLA/NRDAR site; a Fish and Wildlife Biologist for two years in the Crab Orchard NWR CERCLA program; a Biological Science Technician for two summers at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge; and on several bird-related field projects in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Kansas.

I earned a Bachelor's degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Arizona and a Master's degree in Wildlife Science from Texas Tech University. My wife, two young daughters, and I are currently enjoying living in Fairhope, Alabama. We enjoy the Gulf Coast and Mobile Bay, and continue to tally a list of wildlife visitors to our yard, including raccoons, opossums, armadillos, rabbits, birds, snakes, turtles, lightning bugs, the occasional peacock, and an ever fun list of garden insects.

Pete Tuttle: I joined the Service in 1984, as a research biologist for endangered fishes in Nevada. In 1990, I accepted the position of Resource Contaminant Specialist for the Nevada Ecological Services Office, Reno, Nevada. In 2001, I transferred to the Alabama Ecological Services Field Office where I continued to serve as a Resource Contaminant Specialist. Since April 2010, I've worked exclusively on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. I currently serve as Assessment Manager in the Fairhope NRDAR Field Office.

I reside in Fairhope, Alabama, with my wife, son, two dogs, cat, turtle, corn snake, and various other critters. My two daughters are currently away at college. My hobbies include kayaking, water skiing, sailing, hiking, home brewing, and, by necessity, home repair. I also spend an inordinate amount of time with lawn care and kid's soccer. ♦

The Fairhope Crew



L to R: Peter Tuttle, Paige Martin, Erin Chandler, Helen Hammergren, Brian Spears, Ben Prater, Kate Healey, Vanessa Scott, and Jon Hemming, photo, USFWS.

Something You Didn't Know About Me

Stacy Shelton goes to law school

By Elsie Davis, External Affairs

Stacy Shelton, who has served the Service well during her five years as a Public Affairs Specialist, enters a new phase in her career this month. She took the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) in December, and received a scholarship to attend the Vermont Law School in South Royalton. She'll study environmental law and policy in a two year program.

"I like a steep learning curve," says Stacy. "I'm always curious about how and why policy decisions are made. Reporters or



Stacy Shelton, photo, Margie Cohen

Public Affairs Specialists aren't always invited behind closed doors."

After she receives her degree, she plans to work in environmental policy for the federal government, a non-profit, or a think tank.

Prior to working for the Service, Stacy was the environmental reporter for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. ❖

Friends and Volunteers

Volunteers tour Kennedy Space Center

By Nancy Corona, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge



Inside Kennedy Space Center's Vehicle Assembly Building, photo, FWS Volunteer Bill Nunn

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge is special in many ways; however, it is unique because of its partnership with Kennedy Space Center (KSC). Most of the property the refuge manages is actually owned by KSC. There are many benefits to having KSC as a landlord, including having the privilege of taking refuge volunteers on a behind-the-scenes tour of the Space Center.

Each spring, refuge staff members celebrate and recognize our volunteers by hosting a field trip, luncheon, and award ceremony. This year, Connie Foreman, one of our dedicated work camper volunteers, coordinated with KSC Guest Operations staff to schedule a specialty tour. KSC guides narrated a bus tour for 85 refuge volunteers and guests. This tour included a visit into the Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB) and the Launch Control Center, a firing room from which engineers controlled 21 Space Shuttle launches.

The VAB, one of the largest buildings in the world, was originally built for assembly of Apollo and Saturn vehicles.

Later it was modified to support Space Shuttle operations. According to KSC, the VAB's height is 525 feet. In comparison, the Statue of Liberty is 305 feet.

After the tour, the volunteers enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch and award ceremony at the Debus Center at the KSC Visitor Complex, sponsored by our Friends group, the Merritt Island Wildlife Association.

Merritt Island is an amazing place to work and visit not only for the spectacular wildlife and habitat. In addition, refuge visitors, staff, and volunteers can get up close and personal with the United States Space program. ♦

Celebrating pollinators

By Theresa Thom, Savannah Coastal Refuge Complex



Caught in the act! A beetle pollinating fennel, photo, Theresa Thom, USFWS

National Pollinator Week aims to increase our awareness of the importance of pollinators in our lives. Pollination is an essential ecological process happening on a very small scale with global implications. Although honeybees are probably the most well-known pollinators, bats, birds, ants, beetles, flies, butterflies, moths, wasps, and even small mammals are important for the fundamental task of plant reproduction.

To celebrate National Pollinator Week on June 16-22, 2014, several events were planned at refuges within the Savannah Coastal Refuge Complex. The first ever official North American Butterfly Association (NABA) butterfly count was held at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, June 7, 2014. Throughout the day, eleven citizen scientists and staff members documented 42 species of butterflies, including one new county record for Jasper County! Data will be

entered into the national butterfly count database (<http://www.naba.org>) which is accessible to the public. New species were documented for the refuge, and a new butterfly checklist has been provided to Visitor Services staff.

At Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge on June 18, 2014, twenty-one participants documented three species of butterflies, many beetle species, and milkweed specialists including the milkweed bug as part of a pollinator walk. Participants also identified several bird species including wood storks, white ibis, great blue, little blue, tri-colored, and green herons, least bitterns, snowy and great egrets, painted buntings, an eastern wood peewee, and red-bellied woodpeckers. Red Velvet ants, fiddler crabs, and a coyote also were spotted. ♦

Dale Hollow's 17th annual Kids' Fishing Rodeo

By Andrew Currie, Dale Hollow NFH, Celina, Tennessee



This year's event drew a large crowd, photo, USFWS

On the morning of June 7, 2014, a total of 2,000 nine-inch rainbow and eight large display rainbow trout and brook trout were released in the creek below the Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery for the 17th annual "Kids' Fishing Rodeo." Held in celebration of National Fishing and Boating Week, the rodeo is open to kids aged 15 and under.

This event is co-sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Friends of Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery, and the citizens of Clay County, Tennessee. Expert face painter Teresa Nevans was kept quite busy all morning. The Friends Group distributed free hot dogs. The role of master of

ceremonies was shared by Clay County Sheriff Brandon Boone and TWRA Wildlife Officer Tim Singleton. The Clay County Rescue Squad and Celina Police Department also assisted with the event. Corps Ranger Bobby Bartlett manned a water safety information table. Seventeen volunteers donated 85 hours, working alongside agency and local organization staff, to make this event a huge success. This year's event drew a large crowd. Overall attendance was 200 children and approximately 225 adults. People from as far away as Indiana and South Carolina made the trip to Celina to get the chance to catch a rainbow trout. ❖

Exotic Vegetation removal work day at Loxahatchee

*By Rolf Olson, Arthur R. Marshall
Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge*



Refuge staff and volunteers gear up for a productive day! photo, USFWS.

The Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge held its first exotic vegetation removal workday on April 15. Staff members and volunteers treated exotic Melaleuca tree regrowth along the Sign Line, the main airboat trail into the refuge. The workday was successful with about 100 acres of Melaleuca trees treated and saplings hand pulled! Thirteen staff members and four volunteers participated in the event.

The crews were broken up into two different teams. Members of Team One scanned their treatment areas by airboat for isolated Melaleuca trees, and when a tree was identified, it was hand cut and sprayed, or hand pulled. Team Two divided into two smaller groups and tackled tree islands where Melaleuca regrowth was prevalent. Team Two members donned waders, and walked through the marsh, cutting and pulling any Melaleuca trees they came across. Cut trees were stacked above the water

line to inhibit regrowth from any part of the plant touching the water.

The refuge plans to have one workday a month to treat Melaleuca regrowth. These workdays also help the refuge to meet Performance Measures in the License Agreement with the South Florida Water Management District. ❖



Coming and Going Ronnie Haynes retires!!!!



Ronnie Haynes received a DOI Meritorious Service award during the summer of 2012, photo, USFWS

Ronnie Haynes, the Service's Southeastern Partners for Fish and Wildlife coordinator, retired August 1, after 35 years of service. He plans to look for a teaching job at a local university and to do some home repairs.

Responses to Poll Question from May – June issue: What is your favorite season and why?

- “I love the warmer temps for getting outdoors with my husband and children. I love spring with all the new life and foliage that leaps forth from its winter sleep. I love the summer just as much for the chance to play in the pool with my children and grow our own vegetable garden.”
- “It is very hard for me to state I love one season. I really enjoy spring as it shows new life in all resources, i.e., plants, trees, animals, birds. I love seeing all of God's treasures come to life. Then there is fall and I absolutely love the weather and then the magnificent artistry we are provided to enjoy through this season. The colors are absolutely breathtaking some times and I just am in wonder of the beauty we are given from above. As you see I love the beginning and the preparation of the end seasons.”
- “Fall is my favorite season! I love the colors of fall, the smell of a fall campfire and the bounty of harvest. Also love it when hurricane season is behind us once again!” ❖

More of Aaron Valenta's Gardens!

